
Program Improvement and Evaluation

Effective Agricultural Education programs in secondary schools require careful planning and evaluation. The process of program planning is necessary to identify goals and objectives for the program. Program planning involves advance decision making and resource allocation. Agriculture instructors have limited resources of time, money, students, and facilities. Decisions regarding utilization of these resources must be made in the most efficient manner possible to maximize the benefits to the students, program, school and community.

Once target goals and objectives have been specified and the program has been implemented, there is a need to evaluate the program to assess the extent the program's goals and objectives have been accomplished. Agriculture education instructors have a number of resources available to assist in program evaluation. Those resources to be addressed in this section include the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP), and the *Standards and Quality Indicators for Agriculture Program Improvement* (the National Quality Program Standards) <https://www.ffa.org/thecouncil/Pages/index.html>. Additional information can be found in two publications of the National FFA Organization. They are the *Agriculture Teacher's Manual* and *Local Program Success Guide, Second Edition*.

The National Quality Program Standards for Secondary (Grades 9-12) Agricultural Education are a result of a need to provide a consistent delivery of high quality agricultural education programs across the nation focused on relevant instruction, rigorous clear goals, continuous program improvement and the development of essential skills for student success. Input from local, state and national leaders was sought and obtained regarding the qualities of highly successful agricultural education programs.

The National Quality Program Standards for Secondary (Grades 9-12) Agricultural Education are designed to be used by the local teacher(s), administration, community partners and/or an external assessment team to conduct an evaluation of the local agricultural education program and develop clear goals and objectives for program improvement. Each standard or standard statement is followed by a series of quality indicators/questions which further define or assess the standard or standard statement. The sum of the indicators scores serve as a ranking and determine if the standard or standard statement has been met. The sum of the indicator scores must reach the identified criteria score for meeting the standard or standard statement. Local Program Success materials found in the National FFA Local Program Resource Guide may provide additional tools, resources and information to help agricultural education programs meet the standards and standard statements in this document.

Self assessment tool: <https://www.ffa.org/FFAResources/ffalearn/nqpsoa/Pages/default.aspx>

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The National Quality Program Standards for Secondary (Grades 9-12) Agricultural Education are designed to be used by the local teacher(s), administration, community partners and/or stakeholders, advisory committees, FFA Alumni and/or an external assessment team to conduct an evaluation of the local agricultural education program and develop clear goals and objectives for program improvement.

The link at the end of this chapter will take you to an online version of the assessment, if you would like a copy of the National Quality Program Standards document please click the PDF link.

Standards and Quality Indicators

National Quality Program Standards and/or the *Standards and Quality Indicators for Agriculture Program Improvement* are evaluation tools that were developed through the joint efforts of instructors, teacher educators, and state staff. They include standards which each describe a characteristic of a successful agricultural education program. With each standard is a series of quality indicators that serve as questions to help define or measure the standard. Program improvement is a gradual process, and the standards and quality indicators provide the framework for that improvement. The goal is not necessarily to meet all standards during the first evaluation, but meeting all standards should be a part of the long-term goal.

It is recommended that long-range planning should span a five-year horizon. The five-year plan should be more than just a dream; it should encompass realistic goals and practical strategies designed to achieve the goals. It should be based on an assessment of community needs and anticipated educational, sociological, and agricultural changes within the context of the local school district. It will include both short- and long-term goals, as some goals may be accomplished in a relatively short period of time, while others may require a number of years to accomplish. It should include target dates for accomplishing each specific goal.

The local agricultural education advisory committee should be fully involved in the development of the five-year plan. Its members should assist in identifying community needs and in establishing reasonable and attainable goals for the program each year. Specific program goals may be developed from existing lists for state and national programs, but those should be modified to address local conditions. Teachers should utilize the *National Quality Program Standards*, the *Standards and Quality Indicators for Agriculture Program Improvement*, the MSIP report, and the district's CSIP to provide direction for the planning process.

Long-term planning should be viewed as a continuous process with three major phases: planning, reviewing, and revising. The agriculture instructor, in conjunction with the advisory committee, should review program accomplishments every year. They should consider each short- and long-term goal to make revisions, additions, or deletions to the plan. An annual report should also be presented to the local Board of Education to assist them in their evaluation of career and technical education. All entities working together make for a strong and successful program of agricultural education that meets the needs of the students and the local community.

A Department of Elementary and Secondary Education statement concerning articulation agreements and dual credit courses is provided below.

**Division of College and Career Readiness
Articulation Agreements and Dual Credit
Definition of Terms and MSIP**

For the purposes of clarifying what constitutes articulation agreements and dual credit, the following definitions will be used:

Articulation agreement – is a written, formal document that specifies the process by which a high school student may earn college credit through successful completion of certain high school courses when students achieve learning outcomes, skills, and abilities comparable to those covered in a college course. The process allows high school students to move smoothly into postsecondary education without experiencing delay or duplication of courses. Generally, the college credit is not awarded until the student is enrolled at the college issuing the articulation agreement and until the student has satisfactorily completed a designated number of credit hours or terms. Because the courses involved are at the high school level, the student pays no tuition.

Dual Credit – provides the opportunity for high school students to enroll in courses approved by a postsecondary institution for college credit. The student is able to receive credit toward a high school diploma for such courses and upon graduating from high school receives college credit from the postsecondary institution involved and other colleges and universities, which accept transfer credit from that postsecondary institution. Dual credit courses are generally advanced level courses and are open to students who qualify for admission for college-level work. The high school student generally pays tuition, though it may be reduced, for dual credit courses. In order for the course to meet the dual credit criteria, the post-secondary institution may dictate the textbook, syllabus, grading system, teacher qualifications, and other course requirements.